

Finding Your Sweetheart Elder Lynn G. Robbins

Brigham Young University–Idaho Devotional

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I'm grateful to be here at BYU–Idaho with President and Sister Bednar and each one of you to speak at today's devotional. When I received this assignment from the First Presidency asking me to speak two days before Valentine's Day, I'll bet you can't guess what topic I chose for my speech. I'm grateful for Valentine's Day and that my valentine is here with me today.

Valentine traditions are fun. As we explore some of them today, I pray that you will gain some new insights and understanding that will both help you in finding your eternal sweetheart and in enriching the life you share together afterwards.

There is nothing more powerful than love, nothing so motivating or that touches so many lives. There have doubtless been more books written, more movies made, and more songs sung about love and falling in love than any other topic and, perhaps, all other topics combined. Finding your eternal valentine is the ultimate treasure hunt.

"The Lord has ordained that we should marry," President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "that we shall live together in love and peace and harmony The time will come when you will fall in love. It will occupy all of your thoughts and be the stuff of which your dreams are made You will know no greater happiness than that found in your home The truest mark of your success in life will be the quality of your marriage This choice will be the most important of all the choices you make in your life" (1) (emphasis added).

If you were to ask a child to draw a valentine, what shape would the child draw? If you are thinking of a heart, you came up with the same answer that I did. Why a heart? Well, one reason might be for the artists, songwriters, and poets. In old versions of the Bible the word "bowel" was often used to depict love, such as in "let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men." (2) Can you imagine the headache for songwriters if the word "heart" had not replaced the word "bowel"? For example, "I left my bowels in San Francisco"

Back to the question: Why the heart as a symbol? Is love something exclusively of the heart--a feeling? Another valentine tradition or drawing that we often see with the heart is Cupid with a bow and arrow. Why? Is love something that you are smitten with, something that strikes you like Cupid's arrow without any say so? Is it a game of chance like the tradition of the daisy--he loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, HE LOVES ME!!? These are all interesting traditions that lead people into thinking that love is not a choice, that agency plays no role in matters of love.

If we live in a world of agency wouldn't it make sense that the most important decision made in mortality would be our choice and not left in Cupid's hands?

Somewhere in the history of the English language the expression "fall in love" began to be used to describe the Cupid experience. While it is a beautiful idiom, there was inherent risk involved in selecting the verb fall because it mostly means accidental, involuntary, with no choice involved. And subtly, it has also led to the use of its distressing corollary, "We fell out of love," an

all too common phrase used nowadays as an excuse for a failed marriage. "Falling in love" and "falling out of love" are phrases that make love sound like something out of our control.

Many who feel they are falling out of love with their spouse throw their hands up in resignation as if they were victims of an outside influence that controls them. They begin to wonder, "Do I really want to be married to this man (or woman) for eternity?" Having fallen out of love, as they suppose, they begin to drift apart, often saying things to hurt one another. "I don't love you anymore" is a common assertion. They tolerate one another for the children's sake, resenting one another; or they separate, believing their differences to be irreconcilable. The result is a damaged or destroyed family, another casualty of Satan's assault on the home.

How could something so glorious and beautiful as falling in love end up in misery for so many marriages? What goes wrong?

Perhaps you've heard the marketing phrase that "people buy on emotion and then later try and justify their purchase with facts"--or purchasing with their heart and not their head. That kind of purchasing often leads to what is known as "buyers remorse." Sometimes that happens with love. For some people, falling in love is a magical encounter, something that seems to happen at first sight, like that scene in the movie Bambi where Thumper becomes "twitterpated" at the first sight of a beautiful little bunny rabbit. He is instantly smitten by her lovely charm, his eyes become glazed over and dilate to twice their normal size in a hypnotic, enamored stare and his little rabbit's foot begins to thump the ground at 90 miles and hour. You also see a huge smile of contentment emerge on his face that even the cartoonists can't erase. Bambi similarly becomes twitterpated with a beautiful young doe named Faline. I think cartoons may be able to illustrate love at first sight better than poets.

For others, it isn't so much "falling in love" as it is "rising in love." Their love is a growing affinity and attraction toward another, like budding blossoms that flower into a beautiful bouquet. Though the "Thumper/Bambi" love at first sight may also "rise" and bloom like the second, it is often merely glandular, a cotton candy kind of love that has no substance and later dissolves away leaving nothing but decay and one more divorce statistic.

On the other hand, "divine" love, as President Spencer W. Kimball called it, "is not like that association of the world which is misnamed love, but which is mostly physical attraction. When marriage is based on this only, the parties soon tire of each other. There is a break and a divorce, and a new fresher physical attraction comes with another marriage, which in turn may last only until it too becomes stale. The love of which the Lord speaks is not only physical attraction, but also faith, confidence, understanding and partnership. It is devotion and companionship, parenthood, common ideals and standards. It is cleanliness of life and sacrifice and unselfishness. This kind of love never tires nor wanes. It lives on through sickness and sorrow, through prosperity and privation, through accomplishment and disappointment, through time and eternity." (3)

Many popular songs and films make reference to loving forever or an everlasting love. For the world, these lyrics are simply poetic; for us, they are genuine expressions of our divine potential. We believe that eternal love, eternal marriage, and eternal families are "central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." (4) However, every couple will encounter some struggles on their journey toward this glorious destiny. There are no perfect marriages in the world. Do you know why? Because there are no perfect husbands. Actually, it's because there

are no perfect people. But our doctrine teaches us how to nurture our marriages toward perfection and how to keep the romance in them along the way. No one need ever "fall out of love." Falling out of love is a cunning myth which causes many broken hearts and homes.

"The family is falling apart all over the world," President Hinckley said. "The old ties that bound together father and mother and children are breaking everywhere. We must face this in our own midst. There are too many broken homes among our own Can we not do better? Of course we can." (5)

At Valentines there are billions of little candy hearts produced--you've seen them--with words on them that you can combine and make love phrases, like "my girl," "kiss me" (little children always make that word combination--so do big kids), "she's cute," and, of course, "I love you"--all word combinations for Valentines. What combination are you looking for in your "sweet" heart? If you could print up your own candy hearts to depict the ideal man or woman, what would you look for?

Have you ever seen that game show called Family Feud? What a title! That's a word combination you won't find in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Anyway, that's the game where they say "100 people surveyed, top 5 answers on the board?" When asked "what are the most important things to look for in a potential spouse," how did the world answer that question? Do you want to see the top 18 answers on the board? Here they are from the Journal of Marriage and the Family ranked both for men and for women (6)

What is most important to look for in a potential spouse?

	Men Said	Women Said
Mutual attraction, love	1	1
Dependable character	2	2
Emotional stability, maturity	3	3
Pleasing disposition	4	4
Education, intelligence	5	5
Good health	6	9
Sociability	7	8
Good looks	8	13
Desire for home, children	9	6
Ambition, industriousness	10	7
Refinement, neatness	11	12
Similar educ. background	12	10
Good financial prospect	13	11
Good cook, housekeeper	14	16
Similar religious background	15	14
Pre-marital Chastity	16	17
Favorable social status	17	15
Similar political background	18	18

How does the world's list compare with your list? Do you like this list? While there are definitely some good things on this list, did you notice where "similar religious background" ranked? (#15) or "pre-marital chastity"? (#16) I guess the world hasn't figured out what chastity has to do with its #2 selection, "dependable character" or #3 "emotional stability," or # 6 "good health."

Let's now look at the Lord's list and see how it is different from the world's. While the world's list has many desirable traits, it leaves out the more important elements that should come first--that not only help prevent family feuds, but also lead to eternally happy families. The Lord said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). To love as He loved is different from the way the world loves. Paul identified this same love as the love that should exist between sweethearts when he said, "Husbands, love your wives, [How?] even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."(7) Let's look at the Lord's list of 14 behaviors showing how he loved the church and apply it to the loving relationship that should exist between sweethearts. We find it in 1 Corinthians 13 and Moroni 7. By the way, if you would like to ponder this list in more depth refer to the October 2000 Ensign, p. 16, under the title "Agency and Love in Marriage."

True love suffereth long. Have you ever seen this word combination on those little hearts? The most important things don't make it to the world's list. "Suffereth long" means patient instead of impatient and tolerant of imperfections instead of intolerant. Helpful instead of critical of weaknesses. It does not criticize, is not cranky, and does not complain. And is kind, is happy, thoughtful, helpful, interested in others, is a good Samaritan, merciful, gives comfort. It is not mean or miserly; is not sarcastic or cruel or inconsiderate; is not indifferent, uninterested, unresponsive or unconcerned. By the way, can you "fall out of kindness?" That's a question worth pondering. In fact, can you fall out of any of the attributes the Lord gives us in his definition of love? It Envieth not--is content, grateful for blessings by seeing the glass half full and not half empty, is generous, lives frugally; is not covetous, resentful, jealous, or greedy; avoids unnecessary debt; is a full tithe payer. Is not selfish or vain and lives within income.

Is not puffed up--is humble and teachable. Does not seek attention. Praises others. Does not murmur, and never belittles. Does not treat spouse with a "holier" or "smarter-than-thou" attitude. Doth not behave itself unseemly--is courteous, well mannered, reverent, respectful, and mindful; is clean, neat and considerate of other's property and feelings. Is not crude or indecent or improper. Seeketh not her own--is tender hearted, caring, sharing, sensitive, compassionate, generous, and united; sacrifices by putting desires of spouse first; considers money ours and not mine; thinks we not I; listens; Seeks to please God and others; is not demanding, controlling, or manipulative; does not blame; says I'm sorry; does not withhold affection. Is not easily provoked--is forgiving, patient, calm, gentle, respectful; is a peacemaker and does not get angry; is not irritable or vengeful; is not abusive in word or deed; does not swear or quarrel. Thinketh no evil--is not judgmental, but respectful and trusting, pure and obedient; does not think evil of others by gossiping or finding fault; is modest in thought, dress and speech; is not deceitful, cruel or dishonest; avoids inappropriate music, pornography, and dirty jokes. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth--has a temple recommend and wants an eternal marriage; stays close to the Spirit through regular scripture study and prayer; is responsible; is not light-minded. Beareth all things--is bold and patient with affliction and trials (this does not mean that abuse victims should silently bear cruelty, or follow a spouse disobedient to God); is grateful; does not insult others; is not defensive, irritable, touchy or grouchy; is not weary in well doing; is easily entreated or approachable and willing to listen empathetically and communicate without any contempt. Believeth all things--sees the eternal potential of spouse like Johnny Lingo saw in Mohana for those of you who remember that story; makes the least of the worst and the most of the best; shows by actions that there is a firm belief in eternal families; holds fast to the iron rod. Has goals, dreams, a vision and plans for a happy successful life together. Is cheerful. Hopeth all things--is an optimist and looks for the best; praises and builds up; expresses and shows affection. Spouse is best friend. Continues courting throughout marriage.

Is not a pessimist, nagger, or faultfinder. Endureth all things--doesn't complain or murmur; is steadfast; accepts responsibility and is industrious, for the man a provider; shows initiative. Charity never faileth.

Repeating President Kimball again, "This kind of love never tires nor wanes. It lives on through sickness and sorrow, through prosperity and privation, through accomplishment and disappointment, through time and eternity." (8) Never failing means never flirting with others. It means that love is blind in yet another sense with no wandering eyes. This love is committed by covenant and commandment.

It should be obvious to you that the Lord is describing a love here that deals with behavior on all 14 points. And behavior isn't something you fall into or out of. Behavior is very definitely something you control and decide. Agency is obviously involved here.

We also know that any commandment by God involves agency. We can obey or disobey, but there is always a choice. When the Lord uses the command form of the verb love in "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22), He is not leaving this love in Cupid's hands. His commandment is a directive, not to the heart, but with the heart, and to the mind with an expectation of thought, reasoning, decision making and obedience--you can't fall out of love if it's a commandment to stay in love.

Let me return to one of these 14 attributes. Pure love seeketh not her own. Look at the cartoon of this couple in a bookstore. There is a powerful story told in this scene. You ought to memorize it. What do you see here? The "spouse improvement" section is sold out, but the self-improvement section has scarcely sold a book. What does that tell you about human nature? Does it remind you of any of the Savior's teachings dealing with "motes" and "beams" in eyes? You've heard of the cartoon "The Far Side," well, this cartoon could be labeled "The Selfish Side." Your success in marriage will largely depend on your ability to reverse this cartoon and focus on improving yourself, rather than trying to reshape your spouse. It will depend more on being the right one--even more than finding the right one. "Don't just pray to marry the one you love. Instead, pray to love the one you marry." (9)

Your success in marriage will be enhanced if you focus on making your spouse happy more than in hoping your spouse makes you happy. There is greater power in giving than in getting. This is counsel that comes from the wisest of all marriage counselors, "Pure love seeketh not her own." The Savior is wise. His list is powerful. His wisdom is beyond ours. We should trust Him. He is never wrong.

There is a story of a troubled young couple in a marriage counselor's office. The counselor reminds them of their marital vows saying, "don't you remember you married for better or for worse?" The wife says, that's right--he couldn't have done better and I couldn't have done worse." It would be a mistake to think that you are the perfect one while your sweetheart is the source of any problems. "The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none," said Thomas Carlyle. (10) I read that quote while reading the Miracle of Forgiveness. It is the quote that President Spencer W. Kimball chose to begin the third chapter titled, ". . . None Righteous, No, Not One." Pride is like bad breath, it is obvious to everyone but the offender. It is pride that keeps us from seeing our own faults. Only the humble are teachable. I loved Carlyle's quote and used it for several years and then came across the story which perhaps inspired the quote. Listen to his story:

Thomas Carlyle lived from 1795 until 1881. He was a Scot essayist and historian. During his lifetime he became one of the world's greatest writers. But he was a human, and humans make mistakes.

On October 17, 1826, Carlyle married his secretary Jane Welsh. She was an intelligent, attractive, and somewhat temperamental daughter of a well-to-do doctor. They had their quarrels and misunderstandings, but still loved each other dearly. After their marriage, Jane continued to serve as his secretary. After several years of marriage, Jane became ill. Being a hard worker, Carlyle became so absorbed in his writings that he let Jane continue working for several weeks after she became ill. She had cancer, and it was one of the slow growing kind. Finally, she became confined to her bed. Although Carlyle loved her dearly, he very seldom found time to stay with her long. He was busy with his work.

When Jane died they carried her to the cemetery for the service. The day was a miserable day. It was raining hard, and the mud was deep. Following the funeral Carlyle went back to his home. He was taking it pretty hard. He went up the stairs to Jane's room and sat down in the chair next to her bed. He sat there thinking about how little time he had spent with her and wishing so much he had a chance to do it differently. Noticing her diary on a table beside the bed, he picked it up and began to read in it.

Suddenly he seemed shocked. He saw it. There, on one page, she had written a single line. "Yesterday he spent an hour with me and it was like heaven; I love him so." Something dawned on him that he had not noticed before. He had been too busy to notice that he meant so much to her. He thought of all the times he had gone about his work without thinking about and noticing her.

Then Carlyle turned the page in the diary. There he noticed written some words that broke his heart. "I have listened all day to hear his steps in the hall, but now it is late and I guess he won't come today." Carlyle read a little more in the book. Then he threw it down and ran out of the house. Some of his friends found him at the grave, his face buried in the mud. His eyes were red from weeping. Tears continued to roll down his cheeks. He kept repeating over and over again, "If I had only known, if I had only known." But it was too late for Carlyle. She was dead. (11)

Perhaps it was this experience that motivated Thomas Carlyle to write the phrase, "The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none." We would, indeed, be foolish if we saw no need to improve ourselves to strengthen our marriages.

"In selecting a companion for life and for eternity," said President Spencer W. Kimball, "certainly the most careful planning and thinking and praying and fasting should be done to be sure that, of all the decisions, this one must not be wrong. In true marriage there must be a union of minds as well as of hearts. Emotions must not wholly determine decisions, but the mind and the heart, strengthened by fasting and prayer and serious consideration, will give one a maximum chance of marital happiness" (12)

When praying over this most important decision, there are some principles to keep in mind. First of all there is no such thing as a one and only. President Kimball continues, "Soul mates are a fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is

certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price." (13) Looking for a soul mate is to make yourself a victim of what has been called the Lois Lane syndrome-searching for Superman. Young women, he isn't out there. Young men, Superwoman isn't out there either. If she were and you found her, she wouldn't want you.

A misunderstanding of this principle of looking for a soul mate can and has led to divorce. Let me illustrate. It is almost humorous to observe a young unmarried couple in love. After spending an entire day together, they are back together again on the phone that same night. It's sheer torture for them to be separated. Even in their thoughts they can hardly focus on anything else. Love begins to disrupt their studies or work. Everything else in life becomes a nuisance and an interruption that keeps them apart until they can be together again. In their minds there was never, in the history of the world, a truer love than theirs. They often believe they have found their soul mate. We call this level of pre-marriage intensity "infatuation."

After they marry, this intensity tapers off. Living under the same roof, they each begin to discover a few peculiar idiosyncracies in the other that they had not seen before. The love that was blind before now has its eyes wide open. Some of these idiosyncracies are irritating. He is no longer "Superman," but now simply Clark Kent and something less than "super." The infatuation begins to fade. Those who have confused infatuation for love begin to worry and wonder if they are falling out of love, and if they made a mistake, and that their one-and-only must still be out there somewhere. Their relationship is at a critical crossroad. If they believe they have fallen out of love, they may begin to drift apart. Those who think they made a mistake sometimes divorce to free themselves for a renewed search for their one-and-only.

It is at this critical juncture when a dose of true love is needed to rekindle a relationship that is being tested. True love may not restore the same emotional intensity of early courtship or change Clark Kent back into Superman, but it will help love remain alive and blooming. Forty years later, Grandpa can go fishing, love Grandma dearly, but more easily endure a short absence from her than he could at a youthful age when smitten with infatuation. Their love is stronger, more mature, and still blossoming.

Do you remember the movie, "Fiddler on the Roof"? You may recall that in this movie about Russian Jews, Tevia and Golda met one another on their wedding day, the result of the matchmaking tradition in their town of Anatevka. With no time to fall in love they had to learn to love one another. With permission granted from MGM, please watch a 2½ minute segment of "Fiddler on the Roof" to see if they did learn to love one another.

Tevia: Golda, do you love me?

Golda: Do I what?

Tevia: Do you love me?

Golda: Do I love you?

Tevia: Well?

Golda: With our daughter's getting married and this trouble in the town, you're upset, you're worn out, go inside, go lie down--maybe it's indigestion.

Tevia: A-h-h, no! Golda, I am asking you a question. Do you love me?

Golda: You're a fool.

Tevia: I know, but do you love me?

Golda: Do I love you?

Tevia: Well?

Golda: For 25 years, I've washed your clothes, cooked your meals, cleaned your house, given you children, milked your cow, after 25 years why talk about love right now?

Tevia: Golda, the first time I met you was on our wedding day. I was scared.

Golda: I was shy.

Tevia: I was nervous.

Golda: So was I.

Tevia: But my father and my mother said we'd learn to love each other. And now, I am asking--

Golda, do you love me?

Golda: I'm your wife!

Tevia: I know! But do you love me?

Golda: Do I love him?

Tevia: Well?

Golda: For 25 years, I've lived with him, fought with him, starved with him, 25 years my bed is his, if that's not love, what is?

Tevia: Then you love me!

Golda: I suppose I do.

Tevia: And I suppose I love you too!

Tevia/Golda: It doesn't change a thing, but even so--after 25 years, it's nice to know.

While I'm not a proponent of matchmaking--that would deny agency--the story illustrates the point President Kimball was making, that any good man and any good woman can learn to love one another and have a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price. If a husband and wife are willing to apply the scriptural definition of love to their relationship, even a stale marriage and romance can be revived. Stephen R. Covey relates the following experience:

At one seminar, after I'd spoken of the importance of demonstrating character within the family, a man came up and said, 'I like what you're saying, but my wife and I just don't have the same feelings for each other that we used to. I guess we don't love each other anymore. What can I do?'

Love her,' I replied.

He looked puzzled. 'How do you love when you don't feel love?'

My friend,' I responded, 'love is a verb. The feeling of love is the fruit of love. So love your wife. You did it once, you can do it again. Listen. Empathize. Appreciate. It's your choice. Are you willing to do that?'

Of course, I was asking this man if he was willing to search within himself for the character required to make his marriage work. All our relationships follow the contours of life; they have ups and downs. This is why our families provide a critical measure of our character -- and the opportunity, again and again to nurture it. (14)

The choice of an eternal companion is up to each individual. Father in Heaven respects your agency, especially with this most important of all decisions. He won't make the decision for you. He gives guidelines and principles, but the choice is ours. Because there is no such thing as soul mates or a one and only, it would be more appropriate in a prayer to ask Father in Heaven if this is "a one," than to ask Him if this is "the one." Ask Him to bless you with the wisdom to

recognize the attributes of Godliness in your potential spouse. Is this a good man who will honor his priesthood? Is this a woman who will nurture our children in loving kindness? Is this a man or woman enough like me that we can have a happy life together? Be worthy of the inspiration you seek. You will not be exempt from the counsel the Lord gave to Oliver Cowdery found in D&C 9:7-8:

"Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it [the answer] unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right."

After you have studied and fasted and prayed and feel like your potential spouse is the kind of "good" person that President Kimball mentioned, then pray to the Lord for a confirmation, remembering to ask if this is "a one" not "the one." After marriage they will then become your one and only with all other options left behind.

Another principle of revelation that applies here is that each person is entitled to their own revelation, but not entitled to receive revelation for another. The only exception to this principle is for those who have been given a stewardship by God, that would authorize them to receive revelation concerning individuals over whom they preside, like a father presiding over his family or a bishop presiding over his ward. If a young man receives confirmation that his girlfriend would make a good wife, she is not obligated or bound by that revelation. She is entitled to her own revelation.

In conclusion, the decision of who you marry is the most important of your life. It is a decision that will be made with both your heart and your head. The decision will take into account your feelings and your thoughts. Isn't it interesting to note that this is the formula for revelation as described by the Lord.

"Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation . . ." (D&C 8:2-3). In other words, your feelings and your thoughts will be in harmony. It will feel right in your heart and make sense in your mind.

May the Lord bless you. May you know and feel of His love and concern for each one of you, and his desire for your success and happiness in life is my prayer and my testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

1. Ensign, May 1998, p.51
2. D&C 121:45
3. The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball (1982), 248.
4. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102
5. "Look to the Future," Ensign, Nov. 1997, 69.
6. David M. Buss, Todd Shackelford, Lee A Kirkpatrick, and Randy Larsen, "A Half Century of Mate Preferences: The Cultural Evolution of Values," Journal of Marriage and the Family 63:2 (May 2001):491-503
7. Ephesians 5:25
8. The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball (1982), 248.

9. Spencer W. Kimball, quoted in Joe J. Christensen, "Marriage and the Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, May 1995, 64; emphasis in original
10. Thomas Carlyle, quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, "The Miracle of Forgiveness" p. 31
11. Article from "American Family Association" Newsletter, date unknown. Dr. Donald E. Wildmon, President
12. "Marriage and Divorce," 1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977], p. 144
13. "Marriage and Divorce," 146
14. "Why Character Counts," *Reader's Digest*, Jan. 1999, 135

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